Sūrah Ma‘ārij

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Hāqqah, the previous *sūrah*. There is no basic difference in the central themes of the two: warning people of the Day of Judgement and the punishment that they will face on that day. The apparent style of the two *sūrahs* also has great resemblance. Just as in the previous *sūrah*, an oath is sworn in the middle of the *sūrah* to substantiate reward and punishment, in this *sūrah* too a similar oath is sworn. A special aspect of this oath is that in it the arrogant and haughty people who were making fun of the punishment of Hereafter and wanting to hasten its arrival are warned. The Prophet (sws) is asked to show patience on their attitude: they are very mean and malicious. The respite given to them by God has made them very arrogant. If He even catches them slightly, they will forget their pomposity. The Prophet (sws) is asked to ignore them awhile; their judgement day is about to arrive; when it arrives, they will come to know how horrible was the thing they were hastening!

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-7):

People who had been irritating the Prophet (sws) by asking him to hasten the torment and punishment he was threatening them with are reprimanded for their behaviour. They are informed that this torment shall certainly come upon the disbelievers and no one will be able to avert it. They must not measure the time-frame of Allah with their own. Exalted is His abode; the angels and the archangel Gabriel need a day which is equal to fifty thousand years of this world in duration to reach His presence. The Prophet (sws) is urged to be patient and is assured that what these narrow-minded people are regarding as far-fetched is very near in the eyes of God.

Verses (8-18)

A portrayal of the Day of Judgement wherein the sky will be like molten oil and the mountains will be like carded wool. Powerful factions and groups shall no longer be. No person will be able inquire after another of

his state and condition. On that Day, every person would like to redeem himself from punishment by offering his near ones, relatives, family and tribe as ransom if this could deliver him. The flames of Hell shall tear and burn his skin. It shall pull into itself all those who evaded the Divine Call and spent their time in amassing riches and counting them.

Verses (19-35)

A reference to the fact that people generally become frustrated and start complaining if the Almighty punishes them a little for their deeds. If they are given respite, they become proud instead of being grateful and greedily guard the riches they have gathered. Only those people are an exception to this rule who are blessed with the urge of worshipping Allah. In their wealth, the deprived and the needy have a share. They fear the Day of Judgement and know that the punishment of the Almighty cannot be ignored. They are those who guard their chastity, protect their trusts and fulfill their covenants. They stand firm in their testimonies and are also vigilant in their prayers. It is these people who will be honoured in the gardens of bliss in the Hereafter.

Verses (36-44)

Wonder is expressed at the attitude of the people who madly rush at the Prophet (sws) to quieten him when they hear from him about the punishment of this world and of the next. A reference is made to their false claim that they would receive more favours and blessings in the next world than they have in this – if at all the new world comes. On the basis of this claim, whenever the promised doom is mentioned to them, they get irritated. They should remember their creation and not consider their being created a second time a far-off thing; neither should they start praising themselves through their own tongues. Allah, the Lord of the East and the West, can more easily create them a second time. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is urged to let these people indulge in frivolous talk; not far is the promised Day when they will emerge from their graves – when their eyes will be lowered in dejection and ignominy will be covering them.

Text and Translation

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

سَأَلَ سَائِلٌ بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ (١) لِّلْكَافِرينَ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَافِعٌ (٢) مِّنَ االلهِ ذِي الْمَعَارِجِ (٣)
تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (٤) فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا

جَمِيلًا (٥) إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا (٦) وَنَرَاهُ قَرِيبًا (٧) يَوْمَ تَكُونُ السَّمَاء كَالْمُهْلِ (٨) وَتَكُونُ
الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ (٩) وَلَا يَسْأَلُ حَمِيمٌ حَمِيمًا (١٠) يُبَصَّرُونَهُمْ يَوَدُّ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِي مِنْ
عَذَابِ يَوْمِئِذٍ بِبَنِيهِ (١١) وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَأَخِيهِ (١٢) وَفَصِيلَتِهِ الَّتِي تُؤْوِيهِ (١٣) وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ
جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يُنجِيهِ (١٤) كَلَّا إِنَّهَا لَظَى (١٥) نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوَى (١٦) تَدْعُو مَنْ أَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلَّى (١٧)
وَجَمَعَ فَأَوْعَى (١٨) إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا (١٩) إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا (٢٠) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ
مَنُوعًا (٢١) إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ (٢٢) الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ (٢٣) وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ
مَّعْلُومٌ (٢٤) لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (٢٥) وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٢٦) وَالَّذِينَ هُم مِّنْ
عَذَابِ رَبِّهِم مُّشْفِقُونَ (٢٧) إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ (٢٨) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ
حَافِظُونَ (٢٩) إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ (٣٠) فَمَنِ ابْتَغَى
وَرَاء ذَلِكَ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ (٣١) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ (٣٢) وَالَّذِينَ
هُم بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ (٣٣) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (٣٤) أُوْلَئِكَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ
مُّكْرَمُونَ (٣٥) فَمَالِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قِبَلَكَ مُهْطِعِينَ (٣٦) عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ عِزِينَ
(٣٧) أَيَطْمَعُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيمٍ (٣٨) كَلَّا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُم مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُونَ
(٣٩) فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ (٤٠) عَلَى أَن نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَمَا
نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ (٤١) فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٤٢) يَوْمَ
يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَى نُصُبٍ يُوفِضُونَ (٤٣) خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ
ذِلَّةٌ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ (٤٤)

In the name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

A person in haste asked to hasten the punishment which is to befall the disbelievers. No one will be able to avert it. It will be from the Lord of many levels. The angels and the Spirit ascend towards Him in a Day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. So show patience with grace and dignity. They regard it to be far off, and We see it very near at hand. (1-7)

The Day when the sky becomes like sediment of oil and the mountains become like tufts of carded wool, and no friend shall inquire after his friend. They shall be shown to one another. The sinner will long to redeem himself from the torment of that Day by offering his sons, his wife, his brother, his family who remained his shelter and all the people of the earth as ransom and then save himself from it. (8-14)

By no means! It will be a fire that strips open the skin, and calls to

itself every person who turned his back and drew away and amassed riches and hoarded them. (15-18)

Man has been created impatient. Whenever some affliction befalls him he becomes depressed and when good fortune befalls him he becomes stingy. Not so those who pray, who are always steadfast in the prayer; who set aside a fixed portion in their wealth for those who ask and for the deprived and who testify to the Day of Reckoning and dread the punishment of their Lord; indeed, the punishment of their Lord is a thing to fear. And those who preserve their chastity except from their wives and slave-girls, for in their cases they are not blameworthy. But they who seek to go beyond this, then it is they who are transgressors. And those who keep their trusts and promises and those who stand firm in their testimonies and those who keep guard over their prayers. It is they who will live in Paradise with respect. (19-35)

Then what is the matter with these disbelievers that they rush madly at you in multitudes from right and left? Does each man among them covet to enter the garden of bliss? By no means! We have created them out of what they know. (36-39)

So No! I swear by the Lord who is the Master of all the vastness of the East and the West that We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard. So leave them to chat and play about until they encounter that day of theirs about which they are being threatened. The Day on which they will emerge from their graves as if racing towards targets marked. Their eyes will be downcast; ignominy will cover them. This is the Day about which they had been warned. (40-44)

Explanation

سَأَلَ سَائِلٌ بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ (١)[1]

I have already discussed the various connotations of the word سَأَلَ earlier in this *tafsīr*. When it comes with the preposition ب it encompasses the meaning of "to make fun and to ask to hasten something". In other words, the verse should be translated as: a person asked to hasten or made fun of the punishment which is destined to be meted out to the disbelievers. When the arrogant leaders of the Quraysh were threatened with punishment, they would ask such questions: Where is the punishment? If it is supposed to come, what is the delay? We are being threatened with it since ages; if it was sent by the Almighty where has it stopped on the way? Obviously, such questions were not meant for investigation but to tease

1. A person in haste asked to hasten the punishment which is to befall the disbelievers.

and harass the Prophet (sws) and to make fun of the promised doom. They are meant to hasten the arrival of the punishment as well as to make fun of it. In fact, the very reason for hastiness is to make fun. The preposition ب has indicated both these elements in the question because it is used both with إِسْتِعْجَالٌ (to ask to hasten something) and إِسْتِهْزاءٌ (to make fun of something). Thus for example, it is said: يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ (٥٤:٢٩). Similarly, ب is also used as a preposition for إِسْتِهْزاءٌ.

لِّلْكَافِرينَ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَافِعٌ (٢)[2]

The word لِّلْكَافِرينَ (for the disbelievers) can be related to وَاقِعٍ (destined to happen) of the previous verse. In this case, the meaning would be: they make fun of the punishment which is destined for the disbelievers. Similarly, this word can also be regarded to be the beginning of an independent sentence, as has been translated above; in this case, the stress would be that it is their misfortune which is driving them to obdurately show such haste; once the great calamity comes, where will it go except to their own houses; have they prepared themselves to encounter it that they are challenging it. No one will have the courage to avert it. Neither they nor their deities; so on what basis are they inviting it.

مِّنَ اللهِ ذِي الْمَعَارِجِ (٣)[3]

The implication of this verse is that the punishment is bound to come because the threats and promises of God are certain to materialize; however, exalted is His majesty and He is the Lord of many levels and stairways. The commands that originate from His court have their own program and time-frame. His Day is equivalent to a thousand "human" days; for this reason, man should not judge the length of God's Day on the basis of his limited measurements. It is this narrow-mindedness of man that makes him hasty and impatient about the judgements of God. He shows hastiness in every matter and forgets that the Almighty has created separate worlds and each has separate systems and laws. Neither can we know all secrets of this universe nor can we measure God's days by our own days and watches. In Sūrah Hajj, this subject is discussed in the following words:

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَن يُخْلِفَ اللهُ وَعْدَهُ وَإِنَّ يَوْمًا عِندَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ

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2. No one will be able to avert it.
3. It will be from the Lord of many levels.

مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ (٢٢:٤٧)

And they bid you hasten the scourge whereas God does not break His promise. And it should remain clear that each day of your Lord's is like a thousand years in your reckoning. (22:47)

What is implied is that man's measuring units are very small. He gauges every promise and threat on the basis of these units and for this reason he thinks that a long period has passed over a particular promise and is yet to be fulfilled. The truth of the matter is that as per the measures of God only a few seconds or minutes have elapsed on the promise.

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (٤)[4]

This is an explanation of how the Almighty is regarded to be One of many levels: to reach His presence, even angels and Gabriel need a day which is equivalent to fifty thousand earth years. The word مَعَارِجْ means "stairways". In other words, what is meant is that the Almighty is beyond the beyond. Even angels and Gabriel require fifty thousand years to reach His presence what to speak of other creatures.

What is said above is of the category of *mutashābihāt*. It is impossible to grasp its true form. The purpose is to inform man that he should not regard God's affairs as analogous to his own. His one day equals one thousand earth years and for certain tasks he has prescribed a day which is equivalent to fifty thousand earth years. The verse under discussion refers to this special day.

The word الرُّوحُ refers to Gabriel. This mention of the specific after the general is to describe his majesty and grandeur because he is the Archangel. This word is used in the Qur'ān for Gabriel.

Some people have regarded this day to be the Day of Judgement, and they think that its length actually describes its horror and dreadfulness. In my opinion, this view is not only against the context and occasion of the discourse but also against linguistic principles of Arabic. Here the occasion is to express the exaltedness of the Almighty's court and not the horrors of the Day of Judgement. The dreadfulness and horror of the Day of Judgement is expressed further in the *sūrah*.

Here it should be kept in mind that even though the court of God is very exalted and He is beyond the beyond yet he is nearer to man than his life-vein. He watches over everyone, hears everyone's calls and guards everyone. Though we are not able to see Him, He is able see all of us. Our

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4. The angels and the Spirit ascend towards Him in a Day the measure of which is fifty thousand years.

eyes cannot grasp Him but He is able to see us. It is said in Sūrah An‘ām: لاَّ تُدْرِكُهُ الأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الأَبْصَارَ (١٠٣:٦) (no eyes can comprehend Him, though He comprehends all eyes. He is subtle and all-knowing, (6:103)). Therefore no one should stop fearing Him nor should anyone lose hope in Him.

Similar is the case with the angels. Though they need a day equivalent to fifty thousand earth years to reach God's presence, they still remain before His eyes. The Almighty can give His commands to them whenever He wants to, and whenever He wants He can seize them.

فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيلًا إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا وَنَرَاهُ قَرِيبًا (٥–٧)[5]

This is a mention of the attitude the Prophet (sws) should adopt in contrast to those who want to hasten the punishment of God. Showing patience with grace and dignity means that the Prophet (sws) should neither become sad and lose hope because of their attitude nor should take any hasty step in their response nor should he show any compromise in his stance. In various *sūrahs*, besides the directive of exercising patience, it has also been delineated that which makes patience as graceful and dignified.

The verse إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا وَنَرَاهُ قَرِيبًا refers to the fact that these people are very shortsighted and for this reason they regard the threatened punishment to be far off; on the other hand, God sees it to be very near, and in reality it is God's sight in this matter which is decisive. If they had any vision, they too would have regarded it to be near; however, their eyes have been blindfolded and, for this reason, even a thing so near appears to them to be far off. When that day arrives, their blindfolded eyes will see the light and everyone will see what they had regarded as far-off was actually very near. The following verse of Sūrah Qāf refers to this very aspect: فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ (٢٢:٥٠) (today your sight is very sharp, (50:22)). It should be kept in mind that those whose eyes have vision and whose mind is visionary as well never get trapped in this misconception. A visionary person sees with the light of God. Thus a true believer too, like the Almighty, sees such a Day to be at hand.

يَوْمَ تَكُونُ السَّمَاء كَالْمُهْلِ وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ (٨–٩)[6]

This is a portrayal of the horror and of the cataclysm that will take place on the Day of Judgement. This portrayal is meant to stir and

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5. So show patience with grace and dignity. They regard it to be far off, and We see it very near at hand.

6. The Day when the sky becomes like sediment of oil and the mountains become like tufts of carded wool.

awaken people who lack the vision to grasp a reality beforehand: this description might force them to pay heed.

The word مُهْلٌ has different meanings. In Sūrah Kahf it has been used as well. I have explained the connotation in which it is used there. It also means the sediment of oil and the oil itself. If this meaning is adopted, then the purpose would be to liken the colour of the sky to the redish-blackness of the sediment of oil. This redish colour of the sky is also mentioned in Sūrah Rahmān: فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ (٣٧:٥٥) (it will be red like stained leather, (55:37)).

The word عِهْنِ means "wool"; here it refers to carded wool as is mentioned in Sūrah Qāri'ah thus: وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنفُوشِ (٥:١٠١) (and the mountains like tufts of carded wool, (101:5)).

This description of the events of the Day of Judgement belongs to the category of *mutashābihāt*. Their true form cannot be grasped in this world; however, it does come to mind that this redness will be caused by the inflamed fire of Hell; mountains will be reduced to pieces and appear as carded wool so that those who regard them to be eternal can observe their transient nature. Obviously, if such will be the fate of the mountains one can imagine what will happen to other objects. This description of the Day of Judgement is recounted to warn the foolish and naïve who are very proud of their large following and communal support and of their castles and palatial buildings. Thus on this day, everything will be destroyed and a new world with new laws will come into being.

وَلَا يَسْأَلُ حَمِيمٌ حَمِيمًا (١٠)[7]

Such will be the extent of selfishness on that Day that people who remained bosom friends throughout their lives, and those who sacrificed their lives and wealth for one another will turn away from each other in such a manner that no one will even have the courtesy to inquire after the well-being of his friend.

يُبَصَّرُونَهُمْ يَوَدُّ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِي مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِئِذٍ بِبَنِيهِ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَأَخِيهِ وَفَصِيلَتِهِ الَّتِي تُؤْوِيهِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يُنجِيهِ (١١-١٤)[8]

On that Day, people will not be out of sight of each other that emotions

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7. And no friend shall inquire after his friend.

8. They shall be shown to one another. The sinner will long to redeem himself from the torment of that Day by offering his sons, his wife, his brother, his family who remained his shelter and all the people of the earth as ransom and then save himself from it.

of communal support and sense of honour do not arise in them. They shall in fact be shown to one another and all these inflictions will befall them in front of each other. However, such will be the extent of selfishness at that time that near ones will not even inquire after one another. In the thirty fourth verse of Sūrah 'Abas, this subject is also discussed. A complete elaboration *inshallāh* will be undertaken then.

So horrific will be the nature of that day's torment that, as mentioned in these verses, people would like to ransom themselves through the closest of their relatives; however, this desire will never materialize. Neither will anyone have anything to give as ransom nor will the ransom be accepted; each person will have to face the punishment he had become worthy of.

A little deliberation shows that mentioned in this verse are all relationships for which a person has a natural affiliation and a deep sense of honour for their support and defence. The word family is qualified by the word تُؤْوِيهِ. In other words, he would desire to save himself even by giving in ransom the family which remained a refuge and sanctuary for him throughout his life, which protected him from his enemies and in whose defence he himself fought like a fearless warrior.

It should remain in consideration that in tribal life the protection and support offered by a family and tribe has great significance. A person who fearlessly fights for the defence of his family and tribe is regarded to be a hero and he who sacrifices the interests of a tribe for the sake of his own interests or in times of danger shows indifference to its protection is humiliated not only before his own generation but before later ones too.

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا لَظَى نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوَى (١٥-١٦)[9]

The implication of this verse is that his desire to protect himself from the fire of Hell will never be fulfilled. Its flames will rip open his skin even from a distance.

The word كَلَّا (by no means) is meant to refute the desire of the sinners mentioned earlier: their desire to be shielded from fire will never be materialized.

In the sentence إِنَّهَا لَظَى the pronoun in إِنَّهَا refers to the punishment mentioned earlier on. The word لَظَى means "flames". The word شَوَى refers to the skin of the head and the sides of the body. In other words, such shall be the range of the flames of this fire that it will burn the skin of the sinners even from a great distance.

The word نَزَّاعَةً can be regarded as a second enunciative and can also be

9. By no means! It will be a fire that strips open the skin

regarded as an accusative of state. In both cases, there is no significant difference in the implied meaning.

تَدْعُو مَنْ أَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلَّى (١٧)[10]

What is implied by this verse is that when today in this world people are called to worship God and to shield themselves from His punishment and to spend in His way, they turn away and evade this call; however, on that day, it would be impossible to turn away from and evade the punishment of Hell. It will call towards itself all those who evaded and refuted. The word تَدْعُو is very meaningful and expressive here: those on whom the calls of the Prophet (sws) are having no effect should remember that one day these callous people will be called by Hell. It will call them in a manner that they will not be able to escape from it.

وَجَمَعَ فَأَوْعَى (١٨)[11]

The stingy are specifically referred to here because the call to believe in the Hereafter and to spend in the way of God would be the most burdensome for them. A requirement to succeed in the Hereafter is that instead of amassing riches in the lockers of this world a person should deposit his wealth in the bank of God. A stingy person would regard this to be a non-lucrative deal. He neither has faith and conviction in the Hereafter nor has the courage to sacrifice his wealth to reap the deferred rewards of the Hereafter. It is for this very reason that the stingy have remained in the forefront in opposing the calls of the prophets of God. Stinginess and disbelief in the Hereafter are inseparable. It is mentioned in Sūrah Mā'ūn:

فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّينِ وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ (١٠٧: ١-٣)

> Have you seen the one who belies reward and punishment?! He it is who drives away the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the poor. (103:1-3)

The addition of the word فَأَوْعَى to جَمَعَ is meant to convey the fact that they blindly amassed wealth by hook or by crook and then painstakingly protected it after counting it over and over again. At another place, the

10. And calls to itself every person who turned his back and drew away.
11. And amassed riches and hoarded them.

stingy are described thus: الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ (١٠٤: ٢) (who greedily amassed wealth and counted it, (104:2)).

The message of the verse is that such stingy people who evaded the calls of the Prophet (sws) to spend in the way of God because they did not believe in the Hereafter will also be beckoned by Hell to come to it.

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا (١٩–٢١) [12]

The word هَلُوع refers to a person who is impetuous, impatient, and mean.

Although a general word "man" is used in this verse, yet it points to the people who are under discussion: instead of valuing the respite granted to them by the Almighty they are impatiently demanding punishment; if they are seized they will start complaining and screaming. Instead of spending their wealth to reap great rewards in the Hereafter, they became greedy misers and regarded their riches to be a consequence of their own hard work and a result of they being worthy of it. They arrogantly reckoned that whatever they have is a clear evidence of the fact that they are favourites of God and that they will continue to be its beneficiaries and if ever the Hereafter will come they will be given even more. However, if some calamity comes their way they will lose hope and start lamenting. The implication of the verse is that the Prophet (sws) should ignore the pompous and boastful mannerisms of such people; they are very mean and worthless.

Whenever a particular group is mentioned in a general way, the purpose is to express evasion and disgust; in fact, it is meant to disgrace them. It is as if the speaker does not consider them worthy of talking to or even referring to. This style is also found in other languages.

The style of the verse is similar to خُلِقَ الْإِنسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ (٢١:٣٧) (impatience is the very substance man is made of, (21:37)) and وَكَانَ الإِنسَانُ عَجُولاً (١٧:١١) (and man is ever impatient, (17:11)). Just as sexual leaning, anger, greed, and other similar traits exist in human nature, similarly, impatience also has its place in it. Impatience in itself is not something condemnable. What is condemnable is its expression in an unbalanced way or at inappropriate instances. By creating man with conflicting traits and stimuli, the Almighty has desired of him to strike a balance between them by following His directives taught to him by His prophets and to make them subservient to the will of God and to His laws. It is upon success in this trial that success in the Hereafter is based. He has been blessed with

12. Man has been created impatient. Whenever some affliction befalls him he becomes depressed and when good fortune befalls him he becomes stingy.

the liberty of exercising his will and authority for this very purpose. Were it not for this trial, there was no sense in giving him the will to exercise his authority. Neither would there have been any reason to grant him superiority over creatures of the world.

What is regarded as هلع in the verse is also a form of impatience and impetuousness. If this trait dominates his nature so much that other traits and features of his personality become subservient to it, then it is very appropriate to say that man is created from the substance of impatience. When a dish is prepared in a manner that it has a great quantity of salt in it and this actually makes it unbearable to eat, then it would not be wrong to say that this dish has been prepared from salt only.

إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ (٢٢-٢٣)[13]

This is a mention of people who are free of impatience and deviations and are the ones who have been mentioned earlier.

It is evident from the verse that the primary tool that can create poise and balance in the conflicting traits of human nature is the prayer. A person who wants to train and discipline himself in a manner that Satan is not able to lure him should try foremost to be vigilant in the prayer. Without this, no person can achieve success in this objective.

As far as the question is concerned that what makes the prayer the foremost means to achieve this end, this is not the place to give a detailed answer. I have dealt with it in a separate booklet called *Ḥaqīqat-i namāz* (The Essence of the Prayer). Those who are interested should study it. Here I will mention only those aspects which the Qur'ān has alluded to at this point.

It is said that the prayers of only those people are of use who pray regularly. This is a very important admonition. The Qur'ān has also mentioned in various styles people who in normal circumstances never pray or prostrate before the Almighty; however, when some affliction befalls them they become very regular in their prayers and spend hours in supplicating before the Almighty. But as soon as this phase is over, they forget all their prayers and behave as if they had never encountered the Almighty in the past nor will they ever do in the future. Since such a prayer is only a manifestation of the imbalance whose remedy is being suggested here, such a prayer is of no benefit in their training and instruction. Only that prayer is of use which is offered regularly and in all circumstances whether good or bad. A deed which may be small in magnitude but is done regularly is more blessed from the one which may be large in magnitude

13. Not so those who pray, who are always steadfast in the prayer.

but is done erratically and irregularly. If after a sudden burst of rain there is drought for a long period, crops are destroyed due to lack of water. On the other hand, little but regular rain keeps the crops alive and results in a good harvest. Same is the case with the prayer. If a person vigilantly and diligently prays as per the general requirement of religion from him in this regard it will earn him much more blessings than the long prayers offered so erratically that a person even forgets that he had once visited a mosque. 'Ā'ishah (rta) has compared the practices of the Prophet with steady rain;[14] whatever practice he would undertake would be undertaken regularly even though it might be small in magnitude. It is this regularity which injects power, spirit and life in a practice.

وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (٢٤-٢٥)[15]

Mentioned in this verse is the second pillar of religion: spending in the way of God. I have explained at several places in this *tafsīr* that in the practices of religion the prayer and spending in the way of God occupies basic importance. The prayer links a person to God while this spending links him to his fellow human beings on the right footings.

The words حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ do not necessarily refer to *zakāh*. The system of *zakāh* with a specific percentage was implemented in Madīnah and the present *sūrah* is Makkan. These words actually mean that these people do not spend merely to ritually and uninterestedly discharge their responsibility but they spend a specific amount in the way of God as if this spending was mandatory upon them.

It should be kept in mind that in the age of *jāhilliyah* too, people were not unaware of *zakāh* and in spending in charity. It is evident from Sūrah An'ām that the Idolaters would take out a share for the cause of God from their wealth; however, because of their polytheistic notions they also gave a share to the deities whom they associated with God. The followers of the Abrahamic religion were pure monotheists and whatever they would take out from their wealth was reserved only for the cause of God. The tradition of Ishmael (sws) mentioned in the following verse was well-known among them: وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ (١٩:٥٥) (he enjoined prayer and almsgiving on his people, (19:55)). For this reason, it is incorrect to believe that before the advent of Islam the people of Arabia were absolutely unaware of spending a specific amount for the cause of God. The rate of *zakāh* imposed in the Madīnan period could

14. Al-Bukhārī, *Al Jāmi' al-sahīh*, vol. 5, 2373, (no. 6101).

15. Who set aside a fixed portion in their wealth for those who ask and for the deprived;

have been different from the one which was prevalent in the age of *jāhilliyah*; however, it must be conceded that in the age of *jāhilliyah* a specific *zakāh* rate was also prevalent. For this reason, even in the Makkan *sūrahs*, *zakāh* is mentioned many times. Like the other teachings of the religion of Abraham (sws), *zakāh* too was concealed in the blanket of innovation; however, it existed by name. Islam revived it in its true form and imposed it in the society.

In the expression: لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ, the word سَائِلٌ refers to a person who begs others for his needs. This act of his shows that he is needy and thus needs help. Not much investigation is needed of such people. A person should give them whatever he can, and if he is unable to do so, then he should refuse politely. Scolding or rebuking them is not allowed. The Qur'ān and Hadīth have forbidden this attitude. An attribute of people who sincerely pray is that in their wealth such needy people have a specified share.

The word مَحْرُومِ obviously refers to a person who is deprived of the means and resources of life; however, since here it is used with the word سَائِلٌ therefore one can conclude that such people in spite of being deprived in this manner are not willing to bear the shame of begging others. There are needy who have a deep sense of honour and who may have to skip meals because of poverty, but do not want to humiliate themselves by begging others. In particular, those who were affluent earlier on and then because of the vicissitudes of life became indigent can be truly regarded as مَحْرُومِ. In order to help them, one needs to find them and in fact beg them to accept help, as is evident from certain verses of the Qur'ān. This is because the self-esteem of such people does not allow them to stoop before others.

وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ وَالَّذِينَ هُم مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِم مُّشْفِقُونَ (٢٦–٢٧)[16]

Mentioned in this verse is the motive of their spending in the way of God: since they believe in the Day of Judgement, the poor and the needy have a specific share in their wealth. I have already referred to above that those who do not have faith in the Hereafter find it very difficult to recognize the share of the poor and needy in their wealth. Thus it is said in Sūrah Mā'ūn: أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّينِ فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ (have you seen the one who denies reward and punishment; he it is who shoves the orphan, (107:1-2)).

The words وَالَّذِينَ هُم مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِم مُّشْفِقُونَ are actually an explanation of their testifying to the Day of Judgement: since they believe in the Day of

16. And who testify to the Day of Reckoning and who dread the punishment of their Lord.

Judgement they have fear of their Lord's punishment. The following verses of Sūrah Dahr reflect their inner-self thus:

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا (٧٦: ٧–١٠)

They used to keep their vows and remained fearful of the Day whose horror will spread far and wide, and used to give food to the poor, the orphan and the captive in spite of being in need of it; [their motivation being:] "We are feeding you for Allah only. No reward do we desire from you nor gratitude. We dread from our Lord a Day, harsh and cruel." (76:6-10)

It is this very motive of spending in the way of God which is selfless, natural, noble and free of any pomp and show. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān has highlighted it here. Other motives than this or motives which are created artificially have a spirit of business in them; from such motives neither is the soul reformed nor the spending done because of them is acceptable to God. I have explained this point earlier, and further down also I will also *inshallāh* explain some of its important aspects.

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ (٢٨)[17]

This is a very subtle comment on the contents of the previous verse: those who fear the punishment of the Almighty in this manner are indeed very wise for such is this punishment that a person should not stop dreading it even for a moment; no one knows when it will arrive and whenever it will no one will be able to avert it or to divert its course even for a small period of time. It is thus evident that the greatest thing to ward off the punishment of the Almighty is to feed and clothe the poor and needy.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ فَمَنِ ابْتَغَى وَرَاء ذَلِكَ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ (٢٩–٣١)[18]

After referring to the prayer, spending in charity and fear of God, these

17. Indeed, the punishment of their Lord is a thing to fear.

18. And those who preserve their chastity except from their wives and slave-girls, for in their cases they are not blameworthy. But they who seek to go beyond this, then it is they who are transgressors.

verses allude to the purity of their moral conduct: they preserve their chastity; they are not like sex-maniacs who break all limits; they confine the fulfillment of their sexual desires to their wives and slave-girls[19] and do not dare cross these bounds. Those who do should remember that they are crossing the bounds set by God. This, in other words, means that they will have to face punishment for this attitude because the Almighty necessarily takes revenge from such people.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ (٣٢)[20]

Keeping trusts and promises is a comprehensive act of morality and encompasses many other virtues.

The word "trusts" is not used here in a limited sense, as has been generally understood by people. All of man's abilities and capabilities and the means and resources endowed to him by the Almighty are trusts given in his custody. One day, the Almighty will inquire from him how he used or misused each and every thing entrusted to him. The Qur'ān has specified that one day he will be asked about his faculties of sight, hearing and intellect and those who would have misused them will be punished. Similarly, it is also mentioned in the Qur'ān that man will be questioned on the Day of Judgement on each and every favour he received from God.

Similarly, the word "promise" is used here in a broad sense. Included in it is the promise which comes into existence by expressing words and also the promise which is not expressed in words but is acknowledged by the society; similarly, the promise taken by the Almighty from human nature is included here. The most important aspect of this promise is the promise and covenant which the Almighty has bound us in through his prophets and messengers; its statutes are expressly enshrined in the *sharī'ah*.

وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ (٣٣)[21]

Just as the word "trust" and "promise" was used in a broad sense in the previous verse, similar is the case with the word "testimonies" used in this verse. Every person is responsible to bear testimony in the smallest of affairs he has taken upon himself and also responsible to bear that great testimony mentioned in the following verse of Sūrah Baqarah: وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا (١٤٣:٢)

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19. I have already written in detail on the issue of slaves and slave women earlier on in Surah Nūr.

20. And those who keep their trusts and promises.

21. And those who stand firm in their testimonies.

(and similarly, We have made you an intermediate community so that you bear testimony to the religion of God before the people, and the *rasūl* bear such testimony before you, (2:143))

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (٣٤)[22]

Here, at the end, the prayer is mentioned once again. This section of verses began with the mention of prayer (verse twenty two) and now ends on its mention as well. It is evident from this that the prayer is the fountainhead of all these virtues and also a guardian over them. It is as if the prayer is like a boundary wall which encircles and protects everything within it. He who guards this wall, guards his religion and he who destroys this wall will end up destroying his religion. ‘Umar (rta), while referring to this paramount importance occupied by the prayer, is reported to have said that he who wastes his prayer will be even more susceptible to wasting the rest of his religion.

Here it should remain in consideration that in the earlier verse, punctuality in praying is mentioned and here in this verse protection of the prayer is referred to. By protection here is meant protection from various afflictions and dangers which can ruin its benefits. For example, the prayer is offered but irregularly or not at the mosque or by indulging in such acts during it which are contrary to its objective. I have alluded in details to these afflictions and dangers in my booklet *Ḥaqīqat-i namāz* (The Essence of the Prayer) and also in my book *Tazkiyah-i nafs* (Purification of the Soul). Those interested can look up these books.[23]

أُوْلَئِكَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ مُّكْرَمُونَ (٣٥)[24]

Together with glad tidings for the people who have the traits mentioned in the earlier verses, this verse is a slant on the arrogant people of the Quraysh. Inebriated with their inherited leadership, they regarded themselves to be favourites of God. They thought that if the Hereafter does come, then like this world there too they would be considered worthy of favours and high status, and those who are poor and underprivileged in this world would remain so in the Hereafter too. These people are informed that Paradise is not transferred as a legacy; its attainment relates to one’s character and deeds. People who have the character which pleases God will go to Paradise whether they are rich or

22. And those who keep guard over their prayers.

23. This section of verses with slight variation is also found at the beginning of Sūrah Mu’minūn. I have dealt in detail on each and every verse there.

24. It is they who will live in Paradise with respect.

poor. On the contrary, those who are bereft of this character will be kept away from Paradise whether they belong to the leaders of Arabia or those of other countries.

فَمَالِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قِبَلَكَ مُهْطِعِينَ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ عِزِينَ أَيَطْمَعُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيمٍ (٣٦-٣٨)[25]

After hearing the verdict of the Qur'ān, the arrogant Quraysh would burn and writhe with anger. How could they hear that Muhammad (sws) and his destitute companions would reside in Paradise and be the beneficiaries of all favours and blessings while these leaders would become the firewood of Hell. Filled with anger, they would madly rush at the Prophet (sws) from left and right to refute and to humiliate him. The word عِزِينَ is the plural of عِزَةٌ and means "group" or "ally". The verb اهطاع means to "run and move forward in a brisk manner".

In these verses, wonder is expressed at the situation and at the foolishness of these people. If they vainly think that each one of them will be rewarded with Paradise, then this hope is never going to materialize.

This vain desire of these megalomaniacs is mentioned at several places in the Qur'ān. Thus, for example, it is said in Sūrah Hāmīm al-Sajdah:

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِن بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَاعْمَلْ إِنَّنَا عَامِلُونَ (٥:٤١)

> And they say: "Our hearts are immune to the faith to which you call us. Our ears are plugged, and a thick veil stands between us. Do as you think fit, and so will we." (41:5)

In Sūrah Qalam, these arrogant people are refuted in the following words:

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ أَمْ لَكُمْ كِتَابٌ فِيهِ تَدْرُسُوْنَ إِنَّ لَكُمْ فِيهِ لَمَا يَتَخَيَّرُوْنَ (٦٨: ٣٥-٣٨)

> So are We to deal with those who submit to Us as We deal with those who transgress? What is the matter with you? What is this judgement

25. Then what is the matter with these disbelievers that they rush madly at you in multitudes from right and left? Does each man among them covet to enter the garden of bliss?

you have made? Have you a scripture in which you read that you will have there whatever you desire? (68:35-38)

كَلَّا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُم مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩)[26]

The false notion of the arrogant people among the Quraysh mentioned in the previous verse is refuted here: they should not think too much and too highly of themselves; this dream of theirs will never materialize; they very well know from what the Almighty has created them; they should not forget it. In other words, it is not befitting for a creature made from water, mud, and sperm to think of being a natural inheritor of Paradise in its conceit on its noble lineage. No one has this right merely on the basis of this. A person can have a right to Paradise only because of good deeds. If a person does not have this priceless asset with him, then as far as his physical substance is concerned, all human beings are equal to the impurest of animals. In Sūrah Najm, the words are:

هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنتُمْ أَجِنَّةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى (٥٣:٣٢)

He knew you well when He created you from earth and when you were still in your mothers' wombs. Do not pretend to purity; He knows best those who guard themselves against evil. (53:32)

I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Najm that this verse is a strong rebuttal of the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* of the mystics.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ عَلَى أَن نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ (٤٠-٤١)[27]

The oath sworn here is similar to the one sworn in verses 38-39 of the previous *sūrah*.

I have already explained the meaning of the particle of negation at the beginning of the verse.

The words مَشرِق and مَغرِب occur in all three formats in the Qur'ān: singular, dual and plural, and in all the three there is not much difference in meaning. In Arabic, the dual of a word at times refers to both edges or

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26. So No! We have created them out of what they know.

27. Nay! I swear by the Lord who is the Master of all the vastness of the East and the West that We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard.

boundaries of a thing just as it has come in Sūrah Kahf in بَيْنَ الصَّدْفَيْنِ (٩٦:١٨). Similarly, the plural at times comes to refer to the vastness and boundaries of a thing. I have already explained this in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah A'rāf.

Here the Almighty by swearing upon His own self in His capacity of being the Lord of all the East and the West has substantiated His infinite power: whenever He wants, He will be able to re-create mankind even if their remains decay into the earth; nothing will cause any hindrance in this. The aspect of evidence which is the primary objective of every oath is very obvious in this oath. In this world, we observe everyday the sun, the moon and billions of stars rise and set at the behest of the Almighty. So is the re-creation of man once his remains decay more difficult for the Mighty God Who is able to make them disappear everyday and then reappear again? Is the first task more difficult or the second? If He was powerful enough to create the first time, why will He be powerless to create again?

In Sūrah Nāzi'āt, this argument is presented in a more comprehensive style thus:

أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمِ السَّمَاءُ بَنَاهَا رَفَعَ سَمْكَهَا فَسَوَّاهَا وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا (٧٩: ٢٧-٣٢)

Is it more difficult to create you or the heavens? He made it and raised high its roof; then perfected it, covered its night and uncovered its day, and after that spread out the earth, and He brought forth from it, its water and its fodder, and set firm mountains over it. (79:27-32)

The part عَلَى أَن نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ means that the Almighty is capable of replacing man with a better creature who will believe in the religion of God. Another interpretation could be that the Almighty is capable of creating man in a better form. The implication in this case would be that if the Almighty is able to create man in a better form, then it is all the more easy for the Almighty to create him in his original form. People have generally interpreted the verse in the first of these meanings, and there is nothing wrong in this interpretation linguistically as well. I however prefer the second of these interpretations. The reason for my preference is that the real topic of this *sūrah* is that the Hereafter is a probable incident. A big reason because of which the disbelievers regarded the Hereafter to be unlikely was that they regarded re-creation of man once his bones decayed and decomposed into the earth to be very unlikely. The subsequent verses also corroborate this view.

فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٤٢)[28]

At the end of the *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is assured and the disbelievers are warned. If these people do not listen to the Prophet (sws), then he should leave them alone. They should let them indulge in their vain talk and engagements until they are face to face with the day they are being warned of. In spite of this warning, they have no fear of it.

يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَى نُصُبٍ يُوفِضُونَ (٤٣)[29]

The word نُصُب is the plural of نَصِيْبٌ and means a stone set firmly in the earth. They can refer to the stones which were set firm by the Idolaters to present their vows and sacrifices, and can also refer to the stones which are set firm in the earth to act as targets in races and other similar events.

In the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās (rta), Mujāhid and al-Dahhāk, it refers to flags which are set firm in the earth to be used as marks during races.[30]

Abū al-'Āliyah and Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr are of the view that it refers to signs which are marked as a target for runners to race to.[31]

In my opinion also, it refers to a flag or a target. The implication of the verse is that today these arrogant people are showing their tantrums before the Prophet of God and evading his guidance and following others; however, a day is to come when the beckoner of the Day of Judgement will blow the trumpet and these people will rush towards him as if running to their targets in a race. Thus their arrogance will be shattered on that day and their deviant behaviour will come to an end. The way these people will run to this beckoner is portrayed at another place in the Qur'ān thus: يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِيَ لاَ عِوَجَ لَهُ (٢٠: ١٠٨) (the day they will follow the call of the caller without any crookedness, (20:108)).

In other words, just as an arrow goes straight to its prescribed target, similarly these people will run straight towards the beckoner. People have generally interpreted the word نُصُب to refer to altars and temples of deities. This does not seem correct. Firstly, this is just a secondary meaning of the word and secondly, what is the purpose of running

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28. So leave them to chat and play about until they encounter that day of theirs about which they are being threatened.

29. The Day on which they will emerge from their graves as if racing towards targets marked.

30. Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an tā'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed., vol. 29, (Beirut Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 2001), 89.

31. Ibid.

towards these objects. I also am not aware of any such tradition of the Idolaters.

خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ (٤٤)[32]

The implied meaning is that today when the messenger of God warns these people of the Day of Judgement, they rush madly at him; however, when the caller of the Day of Judgement will call them they will rush to him with eyes downcast because of fear and ignominy will cover their faces. It is this day that they are being warned of. Readers should refresh in their memories the question which is mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah*: "A person in haste asked to hasten the punishment…." After the question is discussed from various aspects and the Day of Judgement is portrayed, here at the very end, an answer is finally given to the question: this is the day which they had been threatened with, but they kept on making fun of it. In this manner, the whole discourse is a harmonious whole.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ (gratitude be to God for His favour).

Rahmānābād,
4th September, 1978 AD
27th Ramadān al-Mubārak, 1398 AH

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32. Their eyes will be downcast; ignominy will cover them. This is the Day about which they had been warned.